



My Walking Story


 Initially, I was intimidated and at times still am with the 10,000 step thing, because I am an amputee. I lost my left leg to cancer in 1985. So walking is a big challenge for me. What I am happy to say is that I have stuck with this and continue to improve the number of steps I take. While I may never get up to 10,000 steps in a day, I am definitely over 1,000 steps a day and closer to 2,000 consistently each day. And there are days I have broken into 3,000+ steps which is huge for me. I am also eating better. The challenge came at a perfect time for me, as I will be standing up with my sister in her wedding in June. All I have to do is envision myself in the bridesmaid dress, and the motivation to continue both the exercise and diet is renewed!! I have lost 40 pounds since the challenge started (9/6/04). My stamina has improved tremendously (I'm no longer winded just walking to/from the office), and an added bonus is that I no longer have GERD (gastric-esophageal reflux disease, which is often aggravated by being over weight). I hope others continue to stay motivated in this challenge. Having a picture of your goal in your minds-eye that you can focus on, may be very helpful for others as it was for me. It is OK if you cannot reach 10,000 a day. Just sticking to it, makes you a winner!

As I've said, the timing couldn't have been more perfect for me to participate in the steps program and the results have been more than I could have anticipated. I am certain that it is both the increase in exercise through walking and the changes in my eating that have made the weight loss possible. I cannot wait to see what my physicians and prosthetic specialists will have to say when I see them next!!

 I am on my fourth pedometer by now. The first one, supplied by the Steps Up program, was not accurate, so I bought my own. I apparently "wore out" that one before its 30-day warranty, and the hinge broke on the one succeeding it. My daughter thought that the rubber-banded version was a little tacky, so my present pedometer came all the way from Tennessee.

When I accepted the Steps Up Challenge, I never dreamed of the benefits I would eventually enjoy physically, mentally, and spiritually as well. I had always been fairly active compared to most my age; however, I didn't realize how inactive I'd allowed myself to become in later years. I started thinking of ways to increase my steps each day: walking while talking on my cordless/mobile phones; purposely parking some distance away from destinations; walking regimens on morning and afternoon breaks which have included stairways, two steps at a time; making more frequent trips to my boss' office with files, etc.; more frequent trips to the copy machine, instead of allowing copying needs to build up; walking to my Saturday morning breakfast destination; and on and on I could go. One of the first things I noticed was my increased agility, including less pain with regard to long-standing back and neck situations--a real praise! Thus, I've had fewer trips to the chiropractor, which have saved both the SOM and me some money!

About the same time as I began Steps Up, in conversation with my son, who is serving our country in the Middle East right now, he told me once again that I needed to get away from so much caffeine and said that he had even given up Mountain Dew. I took that as another personal challenge and began weaning myself from so much regular coffee and caffeine-containing sodas. I now blend my coffee at home 25% regular / 75% decaf, drink decaf when away from home, drink only caffeine-free sodas, and drink more water. That was a major change in my lifestyle, which of course demanded that I get more sleep to compensate for the lack of "using" caffeine--another praise!

 As I've become acclimated to the weather by walking from the warmer days of fall to the cooler days of winter, and of course because I've become more fit, I'M NOT MINDING WINTER THIS YEAR!!! For someone who's hated winter for several years now, that's a real praise, too!

This has all been a determined effort, which I know will show some real improvements when I have my next physical. Ironically, I haven't lost a pound as I thought I would, but who cares. I know I'm healthier, thanks to the challenge of Steps Up. Whether I wear my pedometer with the same determination after December 26, I don't know, but I WILL continue the healthier lifestyle I was challenged to begin.

Last week my husband hurt his back and I have been helping him a lot! My walking has suffered. I must get into a new schedule adapting to these new time restraints. I can actually feel that my body is not well. I do not want all the old problems I used to have. I had gastrointestinal problems, felt stressed, ate a lot more, and moved very slowly. I am right now trying to prioritize my activities to be able to make a decision as to which ones I need to decrease so I can continue the same amount of walking as before. The stress of my husband's condition and its affect on me is greatly relieved by walking.

The airlines tell passengers to put on an oxygen mask first and then help others. Likewise, I want to continue making walking a top priority in my life, because I know it will help me stay healthy so that I can better help my husband. Walking is a wonderful panacea and I know it. And the encouragement by the Surgeon General to walk-MOVE MORE--is a further motivator to not decreasing that part of my life.